Fresno Bee

2023.009.128

Silver City Development Is Rejected By Supervisors

VISALIA — The Board of Supervisors has rejected a planning commission recommendation to allow development of an estimated $9 million project at Silver City, 10 miles from Mineral King Bowl.

With Supervisor Robert Harrell dissenting, the board's action prohibits Mr. and Mrs. Walter Seaborn of Three Rivers and Walter Wells Jr. of Scottsdale, Ariz., from proceeding with plans to set up 296 units of motel-type structures, condominiums, lodges and small retail sales outlets.

The Silver City development would have covered about 143 acres with major structures on both sides of proposed State Highway 276 leading to the planned $35 million Walt Disney Enterprises project at Mineral King. Envisioned at Silver City were North Village and South Village, both hidden from the highway.

Actually it was the highway which became the focal point of yesterday's public hearing. The supervisors and Jim James, National Forest Service supervisor, lamented the increased traffic which would generate on the proposed two-lane expressway connecting Highway 198 at Three Rivers and the Mineral King Bowl.

Supervisor Charles Cummings said he is not opposed to Silver City or Mineral King, but "I feel we should have the assurances of an ample highway to service these areas and any others which might spring up."

Don Crawford, a private planning consultant from Hanford, said the precedent cannot be set which allows the use of a state highway to be predicated soley upon ownership of land.

James feels on winter-time Sunday afternoons the highway will be clogged with bumper-to-bumper traffic as skiiers head homeward from Mineral King. He conceded that traffic would be lighter during the summer.

George Whitmore of Kingsburg, conservation chairman of the Tehipiti chapter of the Sierra Club, opposed Silver City because of the projected high population density adjacent to national park boundaries, that it would be harmful to the land ecology, natural beauty would destroyed, and it does not follow regional planning concepts.

"This would," he said, "intensify the tragedy of Mineral King."

Of the 160 acres comprising Silver City the applicants would hve developed about 143 acres. Included would be a 136-unit condominium, a 72-unit lodge, a 30-unit motel and 58 single family residences.

Planning Director Donald Woolfe says the proposal is for these 296 units although under present zoning laws the applicants could go as high as 816 units.

One restriction proposed by the county planning commission is that construction at Silver City begin concurrently with highway construction.

Woolfe says the district which would be formed by the applicants would provide its own snow and garbage removal, there would be restrictions on sewage disposal and water service, and the State Division of Forestry would establish a fire station in the area blending with the land and other structures.

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McClatchy Newspapers Service
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